

Appendix D Statutory Requirements

I. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

1. The 1996 Act conditions BOC entry into the market for provision of in-region interLATA services on compliance with certain provisions of section 271.¹ BOCs must apply to the Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC) for authorization to provide interLATA services originating in any in-region state.² The Commission must issue a written determination on each application no later than 90 days after receiving such application.³ Section 271(d)(2)(A) requires the Commission to consult with the Attorney General before making any determination approving or denying a section 271 application. The Attorney General is entitled to evaluate the application “using any standard the Attorney General considers appropriate,” and the Commission is required to “give substantial weight to the Attorney General’s evaluation.”⁴

2. In addition, the Commission must consult with the relevant state commission to verify that the BOC has one or more state-approved interconnection agreements with a facilities-based competitor, or a Statement of Generally Available Terms and Conditions (SGAT), and that either the agreement(s) or general statement satisfy the “competitive checklist.”⁵ Because the Act does not prescribe any standard for the consideration of a state commission’s verification under section 271(d)(2)(B), the Commission has discretion in each section 271 proceeding to determine

¹ For purposes of section 271 proceedings, the Commission uses the definition of the term “Bell Operating Company” contained in 47 U.S.C. § 153(4).

² 47 U.S.C. § 271(d)(1). For purposes of section 271 proceedings, the Commission utilizes the definition of the term “in-region state” that is contained in 47 U.S.C. § 271(i)(1). Section 271(j) provides that a BOC’s in-region services include 800 service, private line service, or their equivalents that terminate in an in-region state of that BOC and that allow the called party to determine the interLATA carrier, even if such services originate out-of-region. *Id.* § 271(j). The 1996 Act defines “interLATA services” as “telecommunications between a point located in a local access and transport area and a point located outside such area.” *Id.* § 153(21). Under the 1996 Act, a “local access and transport area” (LATA) is “a contiguous geographic area (A) established before the date of enactment of the [1996 Act] by a [BOC] such that no exchange area includes points within more than 1 metropolitan statistical area, consolidated metropolitan statistical area, or State, except as expressly permitted under the AT&T Consent Decree; or (B) established or modified by a [BOC] after such date of enactment and approved by the Commission.” *Id.* § 153(25). LATAs were created as part of the Modification of Final Judgment’s (MFJ) “plan of reorganization.” *United States v. Western Elec. Co.*, 569 F. Supp. 1057 (D.D.C. 1983), *aff’d sub nom. California v. United States*, 464 U.S. 1013 (1983). Pursuant to the MFJ, “all [BOC] territory in the continental United States [was] divided into LATAs, generally centering upon a city or other identifiable community of interest.” *United States v. Western Elec. Co.*, 569 F. Supp. 990, 993-94 (D.D.C. 1983).

³ 47 U.S.C. § 271(d)(3).

⁴ *Id.* § 271(d)(2)(A).

⁵ *Id.* § 271(d)(2)(B).

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³ 47 U.S.C. § 271(d)(3).

⁴ *Id.* § 271(d)(2)(A).

⁵ *Id.* § 271(d)(2)(B).

the amount of weight to accord the state commission's **verification**.⁶ The Commission has held that, although it will consider carefully state determinations of fact that are supported by a detailed and extensive record, it is the FCC's role to determine whether the factual record supports the conclusion that particular requirements of section 271 have been met.⁷

3. Section 271 requires the Commission to make various findings before approving BOC entry. In order for the Commission to approve a BOC's application to provide in-region, interLATA services, a BOC must first demonstrate, with respect to each state for which it **seeks** authorization, that it satisfies the requirements of either section 271(c)(1)(A) (Track A) or 271(c)(1)(B) (Track B).⁸ In order to obtain authorization under section 271, the BOC must also show that: (1) it has "fully implemented the competitive checklist" contained in section 271(c)(2)(B);⁹ (2) the requested authorization will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of section 272;¹⁰ and (3) the BOC's entry into the in-region interLATA market is "consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity."¹¹ The statute specifies that, unless the Commission finds that these criteria have been satisfied, the Commission "shall not approve" the requested authorization.¹²

⁶ *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3962, para. 20; *Application of Ameritech Michigan Pursuant to Section 271 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended*, CC Docket No. 97-137, 12 FCC Rcd 20543, 20559-60 (1997) (*Ameritech Michigan Order*). As the D.C. Circuit has held, "[a]lthough the Commission must consult with the state commissions, the statute does not require the Commission to give State Commissions' views any particular weight." *SBC Communications Inc. v. FCC*, 138 F.3d 410, 416 (D.C. Cir. 1998).

⁷ *Ameritech Michigan Order*, 12 FCC Rcd at 20560; *SBC Communications v. FCC*, 138 F.3d at 416-17.

⁸ 47 U.S.C. § 271(d)(3)(A). See Section 111, *infra*, for a complete discussion of Track A and Track B requirements.

⁹ *Id.* §§ 271(c)(2)(B), 271(d)(3)(A)(i).

¹⁰ *Id.* § 272; see *Implementation of the Non-Accounting Safeguards of Sections 271 and 272 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended*, CC Docket No. 96-149, First Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 11 FCC Rcd 21905 (1996) (*Non-Accounting Safeguards Order*), *recon.*, Order on Reconsideration, 12 FCC Rcd 2297 (1997), *review pending sub nom.*, *SBC Communications v. FCC*, No. 97-1118 (D.C. Cir., filed Mar. 6, 1997) (held in abeyance pursuant to court order filed May 7, 1997), *remanded in part sub nom.*, *Bell Atlantic Telephone Companies v. FCC*, No. 97-1067 (D.C. Cir., filed Mar. 31, 1997), *on remand*, Second Order on Reconsideration, FCC 91-222 (rel. June 24, 1997), *petition for review denied sub nom.* *Bell Atlantic Telephone Companies v. FCC*, 113 F.3d 1044 (D.C. Cir. 1997); *Implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996; Accounting Safeguards Under the Telecommunications Act of 1996*, Report and Order, 11 FCC Rcd 17539 (1996).

¹¹ 47 U.S.C. § 271(d)(3)(C)

¹² *Id.* § 271(d)(3); see *SBC Communications, Inc. v. FCC*, 138 F.3d at 416.

II. PROCEDURAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

4. To determine whether a BOC applicant has met the prerequisites for entry into the long distance market, the Commission evaluates its compliance with the competitive checklist, as developed in the FCC's local competition rules and orders in effect at the time the application was filed. Despite the comprehensiveness of these rules, there will inevitably be, in any section 271 proceeding, disputes over an incumbent LEC's precise obligations to its competitors that FCC rules have not addressed and that do not involve *per se* violations of self-executing requirements of the Act. As explained in prior orders, the section 271 process simply could not function as Congress intended if the Commission were required to resolve all such disputes as a precondition to granting a section 271 application.¹³ In the context of section 271's adjudicatory framework, the Commission has established certain procedural rules governing BOC section 271 applications.¹⁴ The Commission has explained in prior orders the procedural rules it has developed to facilitate the review process.¹⁵ Here we describe how the Commission considers the evidence of compliance that the BOC presents in its application.

5. As part of the determination that a BOC has satisfied the requirements of section 271, the Commission considers whether the BOC has fully implemented the competitive checklist in subsection (c)(2)(B). The BOC at all times bears the burden of proof of compliance with section 271, even if no party challenges its compliance with a particular requirement.¹⁶ In demonstrating its compliance, a BOC must show that it has a concrete and specific legal obligation to furnish the item upon request pursuant to state-approved interconnection agreements that set forth prices and other terms and conditions for each checklist item, and that it is currently furnishing, or is ready to furnish, the checklist items in quantities that competitors may reasonably demand and at an acceptable level of quality.¹⁷ In particular, the BOC must demonstrate that it is offering interconnection and access to network elements on a

¹³ See *SWBT Kansas/Oklahoma Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 6246, para. 19; see also *American Tel. & Tel. Co. v. FCC*, 220 F.3d 607, 631 (D.C. Cir. 2000).

¹⁴ See *Procedures for Bell Operating Company Applications Under New Section 271 of the Communications Act*, Public Notice, 11 FCC Rcd 19708, 19711 (1996); *Revised Comment Schedule For Ameritech Michigan Application, as amended, for Authorization Under Section 271 of the Communications Act to Provide In-Region, InterLATA Services in the State of Michigan*, Public Notice, DA 97-127 (rel. Jan. 17, 1997); *Revised Procedures for Bell Operating Company Applications Under Section 271 of the Communications Act*, Public Notice, 13 FCC Rcd 17457 (1997); *Updated Filing Requirements for Bell Operating Company Applications Under Section 271 of the Communications Act*, Public Notice, DA 99-1994 (rel. Sept. 28, 1999); *Updated Filing Requirements for Bell Operating Company Applications Under Section 271 of the Communications Act*, Public Notice, DA 01-734 (CCB rel. Mar. 23, 2001) (collectively "271 Procedural Public Notices").

¹⁵ See, e.g., *SWBT Kansas/Oklahoma Order* 16 FCC Rcd at 6247-50, paras. 21-27; *SWBT Texas Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 18370-73, paras. 34-42; *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3968-71, paras. 32-42.

¹⁶ See *SWBT Texas Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 18374, para. 46; *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3972, para. 46.

¹⁷ See *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3973-74, para. 52.

nondiscriminatory basis.¹⁸ Previous Commission orders addressing section 271 applications have elaborated on this statutory standard.” First, for those functions the BOC provides to competing carriers that are analogous to the functions a BOC provides to itself in connection with its own retail service offerings, the BOC must provide access to competing carriers in “substantially the same time and manner” as it provides to itself.” Thus, where a retail analogue exists, a BOC must provide access that is equal to (it., substantially the same as) the level of access that the BOC provides itself, its customers, or its affiliates, in terms of quality, accuracy, and timeliness.” For those functions that have no retail analogue, the BOC must demonstrate that the access it provides to competing carriers would offer an efficient carrier a “meaningful opportunity to compete.””

6. The determination of whether the statutory standard is met is ultimately a judgment the Commission must make based on its expertise in promoting competition in local markets and in telecommunications regulation generally.” The Commission has not established, nor does it believe it appropriate to establish, specific objective criteria for what constitutes “substantially the same time and manner” or a “meaningful opportunity to compete.”” Whether this legal standard is met can only be decided based on an analysis of specific facts and circumstances. Therefore, the Commission looks at each application on a case-by-case basis and considers the totality of the circumstances, including the origin and quality of the information in the record, to determine whether the nondiscrimination requirements of the Act are met.

A. Performance Data

7. As established in prior section 271 orders, the Commission has found that performance measurements provide valuable evidence regarding a BOC’s compliance or noncompliance with individual checklist items. The Commission expects that, in its *prima facie* case in the initial application, a BOC relying on performance data will:

¹⁸ See 47 U.S.C. § 271(c)(2)(B)(i), (ii).

¹⁹ See *SWBT Kansas/Oklahoma Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 6250-51, paras. 28-29; *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3971-72, paras. 44-46.

²⁰ *SWBT Texas Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 18373, para. 44; *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3971, para. 44.

²¹ *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3971, para. 44; *Ameritech Michigan Order*, 12 FCC Rcd at 20618-19.

²² *Id.*

²³ *SWBT Texas Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 18374, para. 46; *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3972, para. 46.

²⁴ *Id.*

- a) provide sufficient performance data to support its contention that the statutory requirements are satisfied;
- b) identify the facial disparities between the applicant's performance for itself and its performance for competitors;
- c) explain why those facial disparities are anomalous, caused by forces beyond the applicant's control (e.g., competing carrier-caused errors), or have no meaningful adverse impact on a competing carrier's ability to obtain and serve customers; and
- d) provide the underlying data, analysis, and methodologies necessary to enable the Commission and commenters meaningfully to evaluate and contest the validity of the applicant's explanations for performance disparities, including, for example, carrier specific carrier-to-carrier performance data.

8. The Commission has explained in prior orders that parity and benchmark standards established by state commissions do not represent absolute maximum or minimum levels of performance necessary to satisfy the competitive checklist. Rather, where these standards are developed through open proceedings with input from both the incumbent and competing carriers, these standards can represent informed and reliable attempts to objectively approximate whether competing carriers are being served by the incumbent in substantially the same time and manner, or in a way that provides them a meaningful opportunity to **compete**.²⁵ Thus, to the extent there is no statistically significant difference between a BOC's provision of service to competing carriers and its own retail customers, the Commission generally need not look any further. Likewise, if a BOC's provision of service to competing carriers satisfies the performance benchmark, the analysis is usually done. Otherwise, the Commission will examine the evidence further to make a determination whether the statutory nondiscrimination requirements are met." Thus, the Commission will examine the explanations that a BOC and others provide about whether these data accurately depict the quality of the BOC's performance. The Commission also may examine how many months a variation in performance has existed and what the recent trend has been. The Commission may find that statistically significant differences exist, but conclude that such differences have little or no competitive significance in the marketplace. In such cases, the Commission may conclude that the differences are not meaningful in terms of statutory compliance. Ultimately, the determination of whether a BOC's performance meets the statutory requirements necessarily is a contextual decision based on the totality of the circumstances and information before the Commission.

9. Where there are multiple performance measures associated with a particular checklist item, the Commission would consider the performance demonstrated by all the measurements as a whole. Accordingly, a disparity in performance for one measure, by itself,

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See *SWBT Kansas/Oklahoma Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 6252, para. 31; *SWBT Texas Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 18377, para. 55 & n.102.

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See *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3970, para. 59.

may not provide a basis for finding noncompliance with the checklist. The Commission may also find that the reported performance data are affected by factors beyond a BOC's control, a finding that would make it less likely to hold the BOC wholly accountable for the disparity. This is not to say, however, that performance discrepancies on a single performance metric are unimportant. Indeed, under certain circumstances, disparity with respect to one performance measurement may support a finding of statutory noncompliance, particularly if the disparity is substantial or has endured for a long time, or if it is accompanied by other evidence of discriminatory conduct *or* evidence that competing carriers have been denied a meaningful opportunity to compete.

10. In sum, the Commission does not use performance measurements as a substitute for the 14-point competitive checklist. Rather, it **uses** performance measurements **as** valuable evidence with which to inform **the** judgment as to whether a BOC has complied with the checklist requirements. Although performance measurements add necessary objectivity and predictability to the review, they cannot wholly replace the Commission's own judgment as to whether a BOC has complied with the competitive checklist.

B. Relevance of Previous Section 271 Approvals

11. In some section 271 applications, the volumes of the BOC's commercial orders may be significantly lower than they were in prior proceedings. In certain instances, volumes may be so low as to render the performance data inconsistent and inconclusive." Performance data based on low volumes of orders or other transactions are not as reliable an indicator of checklist compliance as performance based on larger numbers of observations. Indeed, where performance data are based on a low number of observations, small variations in performance may produce wide swings in the reported performance data. It is thus not possible to place the same evidentiary weight upon – and to draw the same types of conclusions from – performance data where volumes are low, as for data based on more robust activity.

12. In such cases, findings in prior, related section 271 proceedings may be a relevant factor in the Commission's analysis. Where a BOC provides evidence that a particular system reviewed and approved in a prior section 271 proceeding is also used in the proceeding at hand, the Commission's review of the **same** system in the current proceeding will be informed by the findings in **the** prior one. Indeed, to the extent that issues have already been briefed, reviewed and resolved in a prior section 271 proceeding, and absent new evidence or changed circumstances, an application for a related state should not be a forum for re-litigating and reconsidering those issues. Appropriately employed, such a practice can give us a fuller picture of the BOC's compliance with the section **271** requirements while avoiding. for all parties

²⁷ The Commission has never required, however, an applicant to demonstrate that it processes and provisions a substantial commercial volume of orders, **or** has achieved **a** specific market share **in** its service area, **as** a prerequisite for satisfying the competitive checklist. See *Ameritech Michigan* Order, 12 FCC Rcd at 20585, para. 77 (explaining that Congress had considered and rejected language that would have imposed a "market share" requirement in section 271(c)(1)(A)).

involved in the section 271 process, the delay and expense associated with redundant and unnecessary proceedings and submissions.

13. However, the statute requires the Commission to make a separate determination of checklist compliance for each state and, accordingly, we do not consider any finding from previous section 271 orders to be dispositive of checklist compliance in current proceedings. While the Commission's review may be informed by prior findings, the Commission will consider all relevant evidence in the record, including state-specific factors identified by commenting parties, the states, the Department of Justice. However, the Commission has always held that **an** applicant's performance towards competing carriers in an actual commercial environment is the best evidence of nondiscriminatory access to **OSS** and other network **elements**.²⁸ Thus, the BOC's actual performance in the applicant state may be relevant to the analysis and determinations with respect to the 14 checklist items. Evidence of satisfactory performance in another state cannot trump convincing evidence that an applicant fails to provide nondiscriminatory access to a network element in the applicant state.

14. Moreover, because the Commission's review **of** a section 271 application must be based on a snapshot of a BOC's recent performance at the time an application is filed, the Commission cannot simply rely on findings relating to an applicant's performance in an anchor state at the time it issued the determination for that state. The performance in that state could change due to a multitude of factors, such as increased order volumes **or** shifts in the mix of the types of services or UNEs requested by competing carriers. Thus, even when the applicant makes a convincing showing **of** the relevance of anchor state data, the Commission must examine how recent performance in that state compares to performance at the time it approved that state's section 271 application, in order to determine if the systems and processes continue to perform at acceptable levels.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH ENTRY REQUIREMENTS – SECTIONS 271(c)(1)(A) & 271(c)(1)(B)

15. As noted above, in order for the Commission to approve a BOC's application to provide in-region, interLATA services, a BOC must first demonstrate that it satisfies the requirements of either section 271(c)(1)(A) (Track A) or 271(c)(1)(B) (Track B).²⁹ To qualify for Track A, a BOC must have interconnection agreements with one or more competing providers of "telephone exchange service . . . to residential and business subscribers."³⁰ The Act states that "such telephone service may be offered . . . either exclusively over [the competitor's] own telephone exchange service facilities or predominantly over [the competitor's] own telephone exchange facilities in combination with the resale of the telecommunications services of another

²⁸ See *SWBT Texas Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 18376, para. 53; *Bell Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3974, para. 53.

²⁹ See 47 U.S.C. § 271(d)(3)(A)

³⁰ *Id*

carrier.”” The Commission concluded in the *Amerirech Michigan Order* that section 271(c)(1)(A) is satisfied if one or more competing providers collectively **serve** residential and business subscribers.”

16. As an alternative to Track A, Section 271(c)(1)(B) permits BOCs to obtain authority to provide in-region, interLATA services if, after 10 months from the date of enactment, no facilities-based provider, as described in subparagraph (A), has requested the access and interconnection arrangements described therein (referencing one **or** more binding agreements approved under Section 252), but **the** state has approved an SGAT that satisfies the competitive checklist of subsection (c)(2)(B). Under section 271(d)(3)(A)(ii), the Commission shall not approve such a request for in-region, interLATA service unless the BOC demonstrates that, “with respect to access and interconnection generally offered pursuant to [an SGAT], such statement offers all of the items included in the competitive **checklist**.”³³ Track B, however, is not available to a BOC if it has already received a request **for** access and interconnection from a prospective competing provider of telephone exchange service.”

IV. COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPETITIVE CHECKLIST – SECTION 271(c)(2)(B)

A. Checklist Item 1 –Interconnection

17. Section 271(c)(2)(B)(i) of the Act requires a section 271 applicant to provide “[i]nterconnection in accordance with the requirements of sections 251(c)(2) and 252(d)(1).”³⁵ Section 251(c)(2) imposes a duty on incumbent LECs “to provide, for the facilities and equipment of any requesting telecommunications carrier, interconnection with the local exchange carrier’s network. . . for the transmission and routing of telephone exchange service and exchange access.”³⁶ In the *Local Competition First Report and Order*, the Commission concluded that interconnection referred “only to the physical linking of two networks for the

³¹ *Id.*

³² *See Amerirech Michigan Order*, 12 FCC Rcd at 20589, para. 85; *see also Second BellSouth Louisiana Order*, 13 FCC Rcd at 20633-35, paras. 46-48.

³³ 47 U.S.C. § 271(d)(3)(A)(ii)

³⁴ *See Amerirech Michigan Order*, 12 FCC Rcd at 20561-62, para. 34. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned foreclosure of Track B as an option is subject to limited exceptions. *See* 47 U.S.C. § 271(c)(1)(B); *see also Amerirech Michigan Order*, 12 FCC Rcd at 20563-64, paras. 37-38.

³⁵ 47 U.S.C. § 271(c)(2)(B)(i); *see Bell/ Atlantic New York Order*, 15 FCC Rcd at 3977-78, para. 63; *Second BellSouth Louisiana Order*, 13 FCC Rcd at 20640, para. 61; *Amerirech Michigan Order*, 12 FCC Rcd at 20662, para. 222.

³⁶ 47 U.S.C. § 251(c)(2)(A)